Culturally Responsive, Embedded, Social and Emotional Learning in Alaska

(CRESEL)

ASSOCIATION OF ALASKA SCHOOL BOARDS

ADVOCATES FOR ALASKA'S YOUTH

This a Project Through Association of Alaska School Board's Initiative for Community Engagement:

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A. SIGNIFICANCE (35 Points)

This i3 application is being submitted under Absolute Priority 4: Influencing the Development of Non-cognitive factors and Absolute Priority 5: Serving Rural Communities. The Association of Alaska School Boards meets the criteria under the competitive preference, novice applicant.

I. Building on Existing Strategies and Research:

For several years now, the lowest performing schools have had mandated to develop plans to improve academic and behavioral outcomes, but these schools have not shown sufficient progress on outcomes. A major factor is the lack of non-cognitive skills essential to academic achievement and school success. Non-cognitive skills refer to the social, emotional, and behavioral skills essential to students' persistence, motivation, and engagement in learning. The term social and emotional learning (SEL) was established by the Collaborative for Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) in *Promoting Social and Emotional Learning: Guidelines for Educators,* 1995 and refers to the process of acquiring and mastering these skills. Based on an extensive evidence base, CASEL defines SEL as encompassing five domains: self-management, self-awareness, social awareness, responsible decision-making and relationship skills necessary for success in school and life. SEL skills along with with school connection and academic engagement is key to any turn-around strategy.

Alongside foundational skills in social and emotional learning, culturally congruent learning environments are essential to the implementation of effective strategies and student success in low performance and high minority schools (Okagaki, 2009). Cultural congruence includes factors such as curriculum content relevant to diverse students' lives; compatibility between the behavioral norms of schools, and students' home cultures; inclusion of the language of instruction and students' home language; and a connection between the pedagogy used in classrooms and the traditional teaching methods familiar to students (Lee, 2007; Barndhardt, 2005; Hilberg, 2002; Yazzie, 1999). CRESEL

will support districts and teachers to take into account research-based factors of cultural congruence when implementing SEL approaches.

a. Social and Emotional Learning Has Proven Effectiveness: There is now significant research highlighting the relationships between the development of social-emotional competencies during early childhood and outcomes in learning and academic success, mental health, and general wellbeing (Rhoades, 2011; Shonkoff, 2000; Zins, 2004). In a rmeta-analytic review of SEL programs across diverse student outcomes, Durlak and colleagues (2011) found that students exposed to an SEL intervention demonstrated enhanced SEL skills/attitudes (e.g., motivation), positive social behaviors, and less emotional distress compared to a control group. Further, *academic performance was significantly improved*, with an 11% point difference between groups on standardized scores.

While social and emotional learning has shown to have significant impacts across the United States, there is a scarcity of peer-reviewed research demonstrating efficacy of SEL to indigenous students' success. Recent research conducted with Aboriginal Canadian students strengthens the assertion that Aboriginal children require additional social-emotional skills to successfully navigate cultural contexts within the school environment. Building on the experiences and perspectives of Aboriginal peoples, enhances programming and assessment to support Aboriginal children and families (Tremblay, 2012).

b. Establishing Cultural- Responsive Social and Emotional Learning:

There is a need to unify the SEL research with the extensive literature on cultural connectedness and ethnic identity. Rural Native students are leaving school at high rates, in part, because of cross-cultural disconnect and the inability to find meaning in culturally dissonant classrooms. By making classroom instruction and SEL more congruent with the cultural value systems of a diverse student population we can build on cultural knowledge, experiences, and frames of reference to make learning more relevant

and enhance student achievement (Kalyanpur, 2003; Bazron, 2005; Guevremont, 2012).

Within Alaska, we have a few tools for building this cultural congruence to serve as a foundation to support schools and teachers. *Alaska Standards for Culturally Responsive schools* was developed by a collaborative between the Department of Education and Early Development and representatives from each region of Alaska (1998). These standards, along with regional Alaska Native values (see Appendix J31) have been endorsed by Native Associations and educational organizations in each region of the state and is the foundation for establishing culturally responsive SEL supports that encompass trainings, instruction, and practice within each district, school and community.

c. Supports for Social and Emotional Learning in Rural and High Poverty Communities:

Implementation quality of SEL programs is often lower in high-risk schools (Herman et al, 2008) and there are unique challenges for rural schools (Johnson, 2007; American Youth Policy Forum, 2010). Research indicates that the successful and comprehensive uptake and adoption of programs can depend on how well they fit within existing values and approaches, the presence of program champions, commitment to and resources for teacher training, and parent engagement (Kazak, 2010; Leadbeater., 2012). Most intervention models do little to build this capacity, which is especially necessary in districts that face challenges delivering programs in isolated districts such as in Alaska.

Some of the challenges facing rural Alaska schools include a scarcity of certified teachers, principals and superintendents. Many positions are filled with recruits from outside of Alaska (Monk, 2007; Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, 2013). Alaska schools can have 15-50% of their teacher pool from outside of Alaska, with rural schools having 90% of their teacher pool from outside of Alaska, White, and unfamiliar with the Alaska Native context within they are working. These teachers are often novice teachers and have little experience with the cultural context of the

students and their families. Further, frequent migration of teachers out of the communities can have a stop and start effect on the implementation of social and emotional learning approaches with teachers choosing classroom SEL approaches without a clear understanding of the cultural context within the community and region. This also makes it difficult for teachers to move past implementation barriers without the on-going support of a learning community or coach.

Although CASEL databases provide an extensive review of evidence-based SEL approaches and some key processes for integrating SEL, there are no resources available that map out how to successfully implement these approaches in rural schools with little infrastructure and facing unique challenges. With the high turnover rates in schools and districts, SEL programs are vulnerable, especially when SEL is not embedded into instructional plans and the vision of the district. Further, many teachers are ill-prepared to ensure that SEL is incorporated in ways that are culturally congruent. ***This project will contribute to the existing evidence-based by increasing understanding of the key supports needed to overcome implementation barriers in rural and culturally specific communities.***

II. *Statewide and National Significance:*

To date, there has been almost no research on successful implementation of culturally responsive SEL programs in communities and schools in which many rural, Alaska Native or Native American students are concentrated. ***Our consortium will contribute to the evidence-base by demonstrating the impact of culturally-responsive SEL approaches that are adapted and fully embedded into district and site-based teaching frameworks.*** The processes and supports developed in this project will be relevant and adaptable to other rural, high minority, and indigenous communities who face significant barriers to implementation of evidence-based social and emotional learning programs.

CRESEL has three primary goals. The first is to build cultural connectedness and congruence around social and emotional skills. The second is to expand the scope of SEL from the classroom to the

district, school, community, and after-school programs by establishing a collaborative structure between statewide, district and school supports. The third is to address the barriers that teachers and administrators face implementing SEL in isolation across a geography typical of rural schools.

CRESEL represents the next generation of SEL programming and Type II translational evaluation. It goes beyond testing effects of SEL strategies on students implemented with fidelity. It is an ambitious attempt to evaluate whether and how culturally-responsive and integrated SEL efforts have the potential to turn around persistently low-performing schools and the academic performance.   It is our hypothesis that we will increase successful implementation and student achievement in persistently low-performing schools. Specifically, working with district, school, and cultural partners, we will 1) *Use culturally responsive, evidence-based SEL process and practices; 2) Build school district infrastructure to support isolated schools to implement school-wide SEL; 3) Train and support school staff and administrators to implement culturally-responsive school-wide SEL; 4) Ensure out-of classroom reinforcements of culturally-responsive SEL.* These components will support districts and schools in rural, low income, and primarily Alaska Native contexts (**see Logic Model, p.6**).

a. The Project Context: This proposal includes six districts and 30 schools, in 4 culturally distinct regions of Alaska, and will reach a minimum of 1,800 K-12 students. A total of 90% of the schools receive Title 1 funding; 87.5% of these schools are school-wide Title I with an average of 66.9% of students at each of the schools eligible for free or reduced price lunch. Thirty schools included in this proposal fall into a variety of rural and remote community types including rural distant, rural fringe, rural remote, and rural towns. While Caucasian, Asian, Latino, and Pacific Islander students attend the schools, an average 84.5% of all students will be Alaska Native, representing four Alaska Native cultures and language groups: Athabaskan, Tlingit, Inupiaq, and Yup'ik.

TABLE 1. Logic Model for Culturally Responsive Social and Emotional Learning (CRESEL) Project

Barrier to Implementation /Need:	CRESEL Element to Address Need	Activities	Proximal Outcomes	Long-Term Outcomes
A Lack of Peer-Reviewed Research on Social and Emotional Learning with Alaska Native/Native American students	**Culturally Responsive Process and Practice Integration** **INPUTS** 1) Regional Values/ Cultural Standards 2) Facilitator Questions and Tools 3) Facilitators (First Alaskans/ AASB)	*Work with design team and cultural leaders to translate CASEL SEL competencies to SEL skills that align with cultural values. *Consensus building for culturally responsive assessment, planning, implementation, and CQI steps. *Enhance cultural congruence between home and school through evidence-based SEL approaches that create a welcoming and inviting school environment. *Host family/student visioning conversations to provide input on culturally responsive SEL *Professional development (trauma-informed and culture-based). * Assist with cultural modifications of evidence-based approaches that sustain integrity of the curriculum.*	1) Teacher and staff reports of climate will be more positive and fidelity and dosage of SEL will be more consistent and higher 2) Increased ratings of family engagement , cultural connectedness.	**Increased Academic Achieve-ment**
Stop and Start Effect of Improvement Programs (teachers recruited from outside of region and novice teachers)	**CASEL Action Steps For School-wide SEL** **INPUTS** 1) School design team 2) Tools for assessment and action planning 3) Coaching/ Training (District/AASB) 4) Community of Practice (district/AASB)	*Embed SEL competencies in Positive Behavioral Supports (e.g. connect SEL skills to behavioral expectations). *Conduct culturally responsive needs assessment and scan with school staff. * Conduct culturally responsive action plan development in coordination with district. * Implement SEL evidence-based approach. * Participate in professional development to enhance culturally responsive SEL implementation. * Consider implications for classroom instruction and throughout the school day. * Support adult modeling of SEL skills. * Build capacity of school staff to link parents to learning.*	Teachers in intervention schools will report higher levels of 1) perceived support within school 2) greater readiness; 3) perceived district supports and coaching 4) supportive policies 5) enhanced student social and emotional skills 4) fewer delinquent behaviors.	
Few approaches and tools available for SEL supports at the district level (trained coaches, policies, processes)	**District SEL infrastructure** **INPUTS** 1) CR facilitator tools 2) Design team: school, district, cultural partners 3) Training: coaches and leadership (AASB) 4) Model policies and policy support (AASB)	* Align CR SEL to adopted teaching framework (e.g. Marzano framework). * Connecting SEL to multi-tiered systems of support (e.g Response to Intervention plan). * Establish vision for district-wide SEL with design team. * Coordinate assessment and scan with school personnel to inform action planning. * Build capacity to support implementation of evidence based approach (including on-site coaching, professional development, and participating in statewide community of practice). * Participate in professional development to support SEL implementation in schools and district integration. * Review and adapt SEL district policies establishing SEL standard recommendations (adopted by board). * Incorporate CR SEL into 21st Century Learning Community Activities	1) Imrproved supports for district SEL coaches. 2) Enhanced infrastructure for SEL.	
Lack of Continuity for SEL outside of the classroom	**SEL Reinforcements Afterschool** **INPUTS** 1) AASB and district supported professional development and coaching 2) Coordinator Support (AASB/Afterschool Network)	* Incorporate and use common-language for CR SEL * Use SEL principles in organizing, planning, and carrying out after-school activities. * Model SEL skills * Participate in professional development * To effectively modeling SEL skills * Integrate SEL activities into afterschool activities and conversations.*	* Improved Social and Emotional Skills of Students * After-school staff report greater district and state-wide supports, coaching, training, and supportive policies * Afterschool staff reports higher SEL skills used by students.	

Alaska ranks in the bottom five states in graduation rates nationally (Grad Nation Report, 2015). The overall rate is 71%, but as Table 2 shows, the rate declines for groups over-represented in rural Alaska, including Alaska Native

Demographic	All Alaska Students	Alaska Native Students	Alaskan Students: Limited English Proficiency	Alaskan Students: Economically Disadvantaged
Graduation Rates 2013-2014	71.1%	54.9%	40%	59.6%

TABLE 2. Graduation Rates of Alaska Students (GradNation, 2015)

students, students with limited English, and for economically disadvantaged students.

In Alaska, some gains have been made in proficiency rates in reading, writing, math, and science in the past ten years, but school improvement plans have not yielded the expected results; Alaska continues to have lower proficiency rates, a pre-indicator of graduation, compared to national averages (NAEP, 2013). As shown in Table 3, 55% of Alaska Natives scored below proficient or far below proficient on Grade 10 math achievement tests. Further, 44.8% of Alaska Natives scored below proficient or far below proficient on Grade 10 reading tests. Disparities in proficiency rates can be seen across all grade levels. Additional supports and resources are need for schools to improve student outcomes and for students to come to school "ready to learn" (Alaska EED, 2014).

District Name	N of Schools	N of Students	% Low Income Students	% Alaska Native	% Not Proficient in Reading	% Not Proficient in Math
Bering Strait	5	1,848	100.0%	98.7%	48.8%	68.9%
Kake	1	111	60.2%	87.3%	20.4%	26.6%
Kuspuk	9	387	88.6%	95.6%	48.4%	64.8%
Lower Kuskokwim	28	4,285	78.5%	94.4%	60.5%	57.5%
Nome	5	700	66.8%	69.4%	30.1%	43.6%
Sitka	6	1,402	30.3%	26.2%	12.0%	24.2%
Overall	64	8,733	70.7%	78.60%	36.7%	47.6%

TABLE 3. Participating District Proficiency Rates and Demographics, EED 2014

b. Application of Project in a Variety of Settings: This proposal will evaluate processes and supports necessary for SEL uptake and implementation in a variety of rural school types with a concentration of

indigenous and economically disadvantaged students. The successful lessons from social and emotional learning approaches in these six distinct districts can have applications for implementation in high poverty, low-performing schools in rural communities throughout the United States. Specifically, the data collected will translate to communities that have few supports for novice teachers from outside of the cultural context and will contribute to the evidence-base for low performing schools. Successful implementation of culturally responsive SEL within these six districts will also directly translate to all 54 Alaska districts looking for school improvement measures and turnaround strategies that can apply to their community context.

B. Quality of the Project Design and Management (45 Points)

I. Specific and Measurable Goals, Objectives and Outcomes for the Project:

We hypothesize that when embedding evidence-based social and emotional learning (SEL) approaches into instructional plans in ways that are culturally resonant and supported at the district and school level, school staff will have higher levels of uptake and ownership of SEL. Higher levels of uptake and ownership will in turn result in students within intervention schools exhibiting greater <u>social and emotional skills</u>, fewer <u>behavior problems</u>, <u>greater cultural connectedness,</u> and higher levels of <u>engagement</u> compared to students not receiving social and emotional skill building supports. Students in the intervention group will also show higher levels of <u>academic achievement</u> on standardized tests than students in the control group.

a. Goals, Objectives, Outcomes: *Goal:* Improve students' social, emotional, and academic outcomes by combining evidence-based social and emotional learning (SEL) programs with the culturally responsive, embedded social and emotional learning processes. **Objective 1: Establish capacity and readiness to incorporate culturally responsive practices and practices**. The goal is to improve: 1) school climate, as reported by teachers and staff; 2) family engagement; and 3) cultural connectedness.

Objective 2: School personnel will have supports to implement SEL approaches with fidelity. The goal is to increase: 1) perceived support within school; 2) readiness to implement and adopt practices to support SEL; 3) perceived district supports for SEL; 4) district leadership support and policies; 5) perceived support from a statewide community of practice; and to improve 6) social and emotional skills of students and school staff; and decrease 7) delinquent behaviors among students. **Objective 3: Increase district capacity and infrastructure to support SEL.** The goal is to improve supports for 1) district-level SEL infrastructure and 2) school-level SEL **Objective 4: Increase after-school capacity to reinforce SEL skills.** The goal is to increase: 1) student SEL skills as reported by after-school staff, and 2) district and state supports, coaching, training, and policies, as reported by afterschool staff.

b. Measurement: Working with American Institute for Research, the proposed evaluation will collect data from both intervention and control schools over the four years of the project to measure outcomes. All outcomes will be compared to comparison schools, controlling for baseline scores. Measurements are linked to surveys and evaluation tools identified in the evaluation section. Measures include teacher ratings of students social and emotional skills; observer ratings of classroom climate at both the classroom and school level; student ratings of school climate and cultural climate. Group comparisons on school records of student academic performance will also be made at the school level. In addition, there will be measurement of key district staff and surveys to determine the impact of supports coming from the district. (evaluation p. 21 and in Appendix J1-2).

II. An Adequate Management Plan

Project staff at the lead organization, the Association of Alaska School Boards have decades of experience managing grants, statewide implementation and statewide evaluation projects. These projects have been carried out on-time, within budget, and met key milestones. Contracted evaluators and key partners at the American Institute for Research have received and successfully carried out the

work for i3 development and validation grants. These experiences have informed the CRESEL timelines, management of key personnel, and budgets. The responsibilities, budget and timelines have been developed in consensus with districts and statewide partners for successful implementation.

a. Milestones, Activities, and Tasks for CRESEL Project

1. Culturally- Responsive SEL Approaches: SEL skills can be promoted in the context of safe and supportive schools and within family and community learning environments in which children feel valued and respected and connected to and engaged in learning (Elias, 1997; CASEL, 2005) By addressing cultural incongruities and embedding SEL, we can ensure that SEL instruction is embraced more widely and is consistent with life outside of the classroom. CRESEL will build on the cultural congruency and culturally responsive classroom research that identifies several factors to consider when more closely aligning school instruction and environments (Sievert, 2011; Lee, Luykx, Buxton and Shaver, 2007; Barndhardt, 2005; Hilberg and Tharp, 2002; Yazzie, 1999) including culturally relevant curriculum content, behavioral norms of schools, linkages between classrooms and students' home cultures; inclusion of culture or language instruction; and bridging classroom pedagogy and traditional teaching methods. The design team, the district, and school implementation team will work with partners and regional cultural leaders to: 1) *Align CASEL SEL competencies to cultural values and embed in district standards; 2) Build consensus for culturally responsive planning, implementation, and CQI; 3) Strengthen cultural congruence between home and school through enhanced evidence-based SEL approaches; 4) Host- family/student visioning conversations for input on culturally-responsive SEL; 5) Incorporate and provide tools for culturally-responsive SEL lesson-planning. More detail on these activities are included in the culturally-responsive framework in Appendix J17-26*. AASB and the First Alaskans Institute will support these efforts by providing relevant resources, facilitation, and documentation to districts, schools, and regional tribal leaders. *The culturally-responsive process will serve as an overlay to the project.*

2. District Social and Emotional Learning Infrastructure: Rural schools and districts face unique challenges around recruitment, retention, and community connection which impact school improvement and school turnaround strategies (IES, 2014). The vision of system leaders frequently determine whether principals can be effective in leading school improvement and will determine whether intervention efforts have much staying power (SRBE Report, 2010). Due to the isolation and community context, instructional authority and local-decision-making require a fine balance and a clear framework from the district. Work carried out by the Consortium for Policy Research and Southern Regional Board of Education, identify key roles and competencies for districts to incorporate into school improvement strategies. Consistent with this research, CRESEL will: 1) Bring together a cross-section of community and school leaders for visioning SEL and improved academic achievement; 2) Focus on policies and support services to enhance each school's ability to achieve its vision and plan within the context of the district; 3) Develop collaborative structures for working with school principals and school leadership teams; 4) Develop tools and processes for principals and teachers to ensure that instruction for all groups of students is aligned with SEL; 5) Provide professional development for district staff, school principals and teachers; 6) Districts will lead schools to analyze data — beyond test scores; 7) Engage parents and the larger community in an on-going dialogue about the changes needed to prepare more students; 8) Establish structures for accountability and incentives for successful SEL implementation, student achievement.

An emphasis will be placed on professional development and coaching to build capacity of district SEL champions to provide coaching and support to principals and school staff, see Appendix J13-J16.

3. Establish School-wide Social and Emotional Learning Approaches: The Collaborative for Academic and Social and Emotional Learning has established processes in place to support effective SEL planning and implementation. The steps below build on the CASEL School Guide with slight

alterations to adjust for a district level and culturally specific support structure. Activities include: 1) Establish School Implementation Group; 2) Build capacity of school staff to link parents to learning; 3) Embed SEL competencies in Positive Behavioral Supports; 4) Conduct needs assessment and scan with school staff; 5) Conduct culturally responsive action plan developed in coordination with district; 6) Implement enhanced SEL evidence-based approach; 7) Professional development to enhance culturally responsive SEL implementation for principals, teachers, school staff in other categories; 8) Consider implications for instruction in the classroom and throughout the school day; 9) Support adult modeling of SEL skills); 9) Participate in learning communities (district/AASB).

4: After-school Reinforcements: After-school professionals and classroom educators can support one another towards mutual goals of academic learning, student engagement, and building key supports for social and emotional learning. Like most schools and districts, the exchange between educators and after-school staff happens unevenly in Alaska. To ensure that SEL is effectively integrated into a whole-school approach means that there are opportunities for after-school staff and families to reinforce SEL learning opportunities. Many of the SEL approaches and competencies can add to components of a high quality out of school program: high expectations and positive social norms; a safe and healthy environment; a supportive emotional climate; stable, trained personnel; appropriate content and pedagogy relative to the children's needs and the program's mission, with opportunities to engage; integrated family and community partners; and frequent assessment (Bodilily, 2010). These were considerations in outlining potential supports for after-school staff. Activities for CRESEL include 1) *Developing and using common-language for CR SEL; 2) incorporating SEL principles in organizing, planning, and carrying out after-school; 3) Adult Modeling of SEL skills; 4) Participation in professional development; 5) Participation in statewide and regional coaching.*

TABLE 4: CRESEL IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

* Note this timeline takes into account months of implementation based on the school calendar.
(See Appendix J-? for Activity Detail and Evaluation Timeline

Activities	2016 J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	2017 J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	2018 J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	2019 J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D
Culturally Responsive Process and Practice Integration																																																
1) Establish Team	X	X	X																																													
2) Build Consensus		X	X																																													
3) Host Dialogues			X	X	X	X																																										
4) Enhance materials				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X																																					
5) Infuse into Practice						X	X	X	X	X	X	X																																				
District SEL infrastructure																																																
6) District-wide SEL Vision			X	X																																												
7) Scan/Assess					X	X																																										
8) Embed into framework						X	X	X																																								
9) Professional Development									X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X							
10) Coach Capacity													X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X																		
11) Standards and Policies										X	X	X	X	X	X	X																																
12) Align SEL Competencies									X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X																																
School-wide SEL And Afterschool SEL																																																
13) School Scan					X	X																																										
14) School Action Plan						X	X	X																																								
15) Implement SEL																				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X													
16) Professional Development																			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X		X						
17) Infuse in Practice																				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X												
18) Infuse Practice into Afterschool																			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X						
19) SEL family families														X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X													

b. Qualifications and Roles of Team Members: The CRESEL team bring extensive expertise in social and emotional learning, evaluation and the Alaskan context. Most recently, the Project Director, Lori Grassgreen, coordinated a 4 year evaluation on the effectiveness of the Alaska adaptations of the 4th R SEL curriculum. Working closely with the Alaska Department of Education, Canadian Centers for Addiction and Mental Health, and evaluators from the University of Western Ontario. This included statewide adaptations, school implementation and evaluation over four years of the project.

AASB has been working with the American Institute for Research for more than 10 years. The American Institute of Research (AIR), and AASB have developed and reported on the Alaska School Climate and Connectedness Survey measuring student and staff perceptions of school climate and social emotional skills since 2005. In 2011, AIR was contracted to evaluate the impact of the AASB's Quality Schools Quality Student Project in Alaska. This project was focused on improving academic achievement of Alaska Native students in schools across Alaska. ***It was found that Alaska Native students in 15 intervention districts made gains in academic achievement that were greater than would be expected based on changes in academic achievement among Alaska Native students statewide.*** There was also reduction in incidence of vandalism, fights, and alcohol use among students at school or school events (AIR, 2009) .

AASB has worked with each region of Alaska to identify core cultural values and character building qualities as they relate to Developmental Assets. These materials and trainings are requested by schools and groups throughout Alaska.

A detailed list of activities and responsibilities are in Appendix J11-J-12

TABLE 5: Project Management Team Qualifications & Roles/Responsibilities

AASB TEAM MEMBER	TITLE (Project Allocation)	EXPERIENCE	PROJECT RESPONSIBILITIES
Heather Coulehan Education: *Masters in Education*	**SEL Coordinator (.85 FTE)**	** Participated as collaborator & professional development coach in the CASEL Collaborating Districts Initiative.* ** Provided SEL supports & training within District .* ** Managed grants and facilitated processes with community, school and district partners statewide.*	** Facilitate district planning.* ** Coordinate prof. dev.* ** Support district champions to provide school coaching.* ** Support implementation and learning communities.*
Lori Grassgreen: *Masters of Arts, International Development*	**Director, Initiative for Community Engagement (.35 FTE)**	**Coordinated Alaska Fourth R (SEL) evaluation and adaptation.* ** Manages grants and large-scale projects for 10 years;* ** Convenes school, tribal, and state partners for state initiatives* ** Managed large teams and coordinated technical assistance for Centers for Disease Control prevention project.* ** Manages contracts with evaluators for statewide data collection, community engagement and school improvement.* ** Provides technical assistance district and community partners*	** Oversee personnel & contracts.* ** Ensure milestones are met (within budget and timeline).* ** Co-facilitate planning and cultural conversations.* ** Coordinate reporting and dissemination.*
Jenni Lefing, *Masters of Arts Sust. Dev.*	**School Climate Coord (.35 FTE)**	** Served as a School Climate and Connectedness Coordinator and Community Engagement Educator for more than 6 years.* ** Established and maintains relationships with data point person in districts/ sites.*	** Support data collection and reporting.* ** Support schools/ districts developing school climate policies and practices*
TBD *Masters in Education*	**SEL Specialist (.20 FTE) AASB**	*N/A*	** Provide support to schools & SEL coordinator for implementation.*
Contracted Team Members	**Title (Project Allocation)**	**EXPERIENCE**	**PROJECT RESPONSIBILITIES**
Liz- Medicine Crow *Juris Doctorate, Indian Law*	**Conversation Hosts,** CEO First Alaskans (FAI)	** First Alaskans Staff has extensive experience working closely with their constituents, tribes across Alaska.* ** FAI staff hosts Alaska Native discussions on Racial Equity funded through Kellogg Foundation.*	** Co-host community and district conversations to guide culturally responsive planning / CQI.*
Six District SEL Champions	**.20 to .60 FTE** (site make-up)	** Varies- All SEL Champions will have some background in supporting school sites and will undergo extensive professional development.*	** Coach and support culturally responsive SEL in school sites.*
Thomas Azzarella	**Director, Alaska Afterschool Network**	** Currently supports afterschool staff and direct afterschool policy statewide.*	** Assist in the support of SEL implementation into afterschool activites.*
***The Association of Alaska School Boards Project Management team are included in this table. Resumes are provided in Appendix F. Table 5 highlights statewide and local partners that will dedicate time to CRESEL. Allocations for the AASB Executive Director, Business Manager, Accountant, Administrative Assistant have been incorporated into the budget for hours dedicated to the CRESEL Project.			

AIR	TITLE	EXPERIENCE	RESPONSIBILITIES
David Osher, *Ph.D.*	**Vice President and Institute Fellow in the Health and Development Program**	* *Nationally recognized expert on the evaluation of student support initiatives and the conditions for learning in schools.* * *Led AIR's contract that supported the Interagency Coordinating Council, to improve results for children and youth with serious emotional disturbance.* * *Principal Investigator on national school improvements projects*	* Senior Advisor for CRESEL *Quality assurance for major deiverables
Kim Kendziora *Ph.D.*	**Evaluation Director**	* *Worked at AIR for 15 years, focusing almost exclusively on the evaluation of school-based student support initiatives.* * *Leads evaluations of CASEL's CDI initiative and a district-wide evaluation of PATHS in the Cleveland School District funded through the i3 initiative.*	* She will serve as the Evaluation Director for this Project and provide methodological leadership to all aspects of the evaluation.
Yibing Li *Ph.D.*	**Lead Analyst**	* *Specializes in research design, advanced quantitative methods, and evaluations of educational programs.* * *Leads design and data analysis of evaluation projects..* * *Published numerous articles in peer-reviewed journals*	* Lead study design and analysis of project data. * Support dissemination.
Elizabeth Spier *Ph.D*	**Senior Advisor**	* *Has over 10 years of experience managing large-scale studies examining the effectiveness of interventions.* * *Leads ongoing evaluation of school climate in Alaska* * *Leads 60- school randomized control trial to assess the impact of the Families and Schools Together turning around persistently low performing schools in Philadelphia*	* Directs the administration of the School Climate and Connectedness Survey * Quality assurance for major deliverables.
Shazia Miller *Ph.D*	**Managing Director, Education Division**	* *20 years of experience in evaluation, conducting rigorous studies with practical implications* * *Focuses on data-driven decision-making* * *Principal investigator on Ohio Race-to-the-Top assessment*	* She will provide additional quality review for all design plans and reports that is independent of ongoing project operations.
Juliette Berg *Ph.D*	**Researcher, Quant Analyst**	* *Experience conducting applied research in k-12 settings* **worked on large-scale randomized control trials of social and emotional learning interventions in elementary schools, an instructional improvement intervention in high schools.*	* Supports program evaluation and implementation science and quantitative analysis
***Additional project staff include Lisa Sturgis, *Data Collection Manager*, Fangyi Huang, *Research Associate*, Sooyun Chung, *Research Assistant*, *Quality Assurance Reviewer* and *Editor* (TBD). A full breakdown of hours dedicated to CRESEL is provided within the budget and resumes are provided in Appendix F.			

III. PROCEDURES FOR ENSURING FEEDBACK AND CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

A significant portion of time and documentation will be dedicated to implementation quality and improvements. The Implementation Team will monitor progress on the following key activities in its bi-weekly meetings: (1) progress on SEL planning process; (2) the ability for schools and districts to incorporate cultural framework; (3) district SEL coach capacity; (4) SEL implementation; (5) perceived professional development and coaching supports. Implementation of key activities will be monitored against due dates and performance targets using the project management tracking tool

Appendix J5-J8. Attendance sheets will be used at trainings and anonymous evaluations will be collected and submitted to AASB and the American Institute for Research. A report regarding the CRESEL fidelity observations will be provided to the Implementation Team by the evaluators.

SEL coaches will be asked to submit meeting and coaching logs on a monthly basis. Each district will submit logs documenting the dates and attendees of Leadership Team meetings and small staff workgroups, the number of hours the SEL coach spends in each school, the target of their support, and what kind of support is provided. AASB will compare the log data against the project plan for schools to ensure comparable progress across all 15 schools.

Throughout this project, First Alaskans Institute will host guided conversations and stakeholder interviews with community members to assess the congruence between SEL and cultural values and to ensure that implementation adheres to the intended cultural commitment. This will be carried out three times in year 1 and 2 and twice in year 3 and 4 of the project. Documentation will be analyzed for quality improvements within sites.

The outcome evaluation will be monitored through ongoing reports provided by the AIR Evaluation Director to the Management Team. Reports will compare completion rates of the data collected by teacher reports, surveys, and school records data against the targets

IV. MECHANISMS TO DISSEMINATE INFORMATION FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT/REPLICATION

The expert institutions and stakeholders involved with CRESEL will disseminate findings to support further development or replication nationally. Dr. Osher, Senior Advisor for this project, is a nationally recognized expert on the evaluation of student support initiatives and the measurement of conditions for learning in schools. Osher currently serves as Principal Investigator for several workgroups for SEL and prevention efficacy at the national level. Dr. Kendziora has particular expertise in research

on school-based programs related to students' social and emotional learning, behavior, and health and has authored numerous publications and peer-reviewed articles. Her work has helped to advance understanding of how schools and communities can support *all* children's academic, social, and emotional development. All of the evaluation project staff bring decades of experience with publications, presentations, and dissemination of effective school improvement strategies and efficacy of social and emotional learning programs.

The Association of Alaska School Boards (AASB), is the go-to organization for school boards, regional education authorities, and local advisory committees. Successful implementation of culturally responsive SEL within these six districts will directly translate to the 54 districts in Alaska. Each district is a member of AASB, which allows for easy *dissemination and replication of the approaches within Alaska*. Specifically, AASB hosts six conferences per year for school boards, superintendents and district staff. At these venues, our districts look to AASB to feature innovative approaches to bring back to their own districts. AASB also has relationships with school board associations nationally and participates in the national school board conferences. AASB will present and share findings.

The project implementation team has both in-state and national expertise. Project Director, Lori Grassgreen, has served as a consultant for national organizations such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and National Association of County and City Health Officials. She presents nationally on topics surrounding education, equity, and cultural adaptations. Within Alaska, she serves on advisory and visionary councils for many strategic coalitions within the state and nationally will have opportunities to share with tribal educators.

B. Evaluation (20 Points)

I. CLARITY OF EVALUATION QUESTIONS AND EVALUATION OVERVIEW

The American Institutes for Research (AIR) will conduct the independent evaluation of CRESEL, which will assess the effects of CRESEL on teacher, school, and student outcomes included in the Logic Model (Table 6 Appendix J1 and J2) and document the implementation process, including implementation quality and factors that may be associated with success. The study will use a blocked cluster-randomized controlled design, with districts as the blocks and schools as the unit of randomization. The evaluation is guided by three questions:

1. What is the impact of CRESEL on teacher attitudes and readiness to implement SEL programming and the level of support from the school and district?

2. What is the impact of introducing CRESEL to school climate and SEL practices?

3. What is the impact of CRESEL on students' social and emotional skills, behavior problems, learning engagement, and academic performance?

The hypotheses are that compared to controls: (1) teachers in the intervention schools will report higher levels of support from the school and district, exhibit more positive attitudes and greater cultural competence, and greater readiness to implement SEL programs; (2) teachers in the intervention schools report greater usage of practices aligned with CRESEL; (3) intervention schools will carry out more and higher-quality SEL activities, (4) teacher and staff reports of school climate will be more positive; and (5) student social and emotional skills and academic achievement will be higher.

II. DESIGN OVERVIEW AND METHODS

We will conduct a blocked cluster-randomized control trial in which student and teacher outcomes for schools in the treatment condition are compared to outcomes in the control condition. Schools will be randomly assigned either to adopt CRESEL or to the control group, within districts (which serve as the blocks). Participating districts are located in culturally distinct regions and serve students representing

four Alaska Native cultures and language groups. Within-district randomization controls for these cultural factors that may influence implementation and effectiveness of the program and ensures that each district has schools in both conditions. After randomization, we will use data from the Alaska School Report Card and the Alaska School Climate and Connectedness Survey (SCCS) data to assess baseline equivalence on school characteristics and school climate between the two study groups. The experimental study will generate internally valid evidence on the impact of CRESEL that meet the requirements of the What Works Clearinghouse evidence standards without reservations.

a. Sampling Plan. All of the five participating districts[1] are located in rural remote or distant areas in Alaska, serving predominantly Alaska Native students (84.5%). There are 64 schools from these districts, many of which are among the lowest performing in the state according to Alaska School Report Card data. As shown in Table 6, in the largest three districts, roughly half of the students are not proficient in reading and more than 60 percent of students are not proficient in mathematics. **see Table 3. Characteristics of Participating Districts on page 6.**

From this pool, AIR will implement a two-step process to select 30 schools. First, we will use three selection criteria to establish a sampling pool of schools: (1) the school has not adopted any SEL programs that are similar to CRESEL; (2) at least 60 percent of the student body are Alaska Natives and at least 50 percent of students are eligible for free or reduced price lunch; and (3) the school is a low-performing school, defined as being rated as 3-stars or below by the Alaska School Performance Index (ASPI).[2]

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[1] There are 6 state-defined districts. Two of the very small and similar districts will form a pseudo district during randomization. Randomization will be conducted within 5 districts/pseudo districts.
[2] The ASPI system scores schools based on student growth as well as proficiency in state assessments and
[2] The ASPI system scores schools based on student growth as well as proficiency in state assessments and other achievement indicators. The top performing schools in the state are rated as 5-star schools, while the lowest performing schools will be rated as 1-star schools.

AIR's experience conducting similar studies with challenging tracking and follow-up requirements has shown that high engagement by participating schools is essential for random assignment studies. AASB has close relationships with local districts and the districts are strongly committed to the study and will reach out and recruit the necessary study participants. We will not randomize until we have memoranda of understanding from the schools and to enhance school buy-in and improve response rates.

Most schools from the participating districts serve grades K to 12, with a small number of students per grade. Given that the CRESEL is a whole-school program intended to serve all students, students across all grade levels in the intervention and control schools will be included in the evaluation[3]. Our calculation based on the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development data for 2014–15 shows that on average there are 136 students per school. In other words, there are about 10 students per grade level per school. Based on experience in previous projects, we anticipate that about 80% of students will have permission to participate. Assuming a 25% post-randomization student attrition rate due to student mobility, we estimated that the study sample will include 1,800 students from 30 schools. All teachers, staff, including after school program staff will be included and surveyed. Based on state data, we estimate that there are 10 staff members per school, resulting in a total of 300 in the 30 schools.

III. DATA COLLECTION AND MEASURES

Table 7 outlines the data to be collected, the purpose of each collection, and the time points at which they will be collected. AIR will use a variety of measures to capture student and school outcomes and the implementation of CRESEL (descriptions of measures are provided in Appendix J). All of the

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[3] Grade 11 and 12 students will not be included as part of the study sample because they will have left the school by the time the outcome data are collected. Students who enter the participating schools after the CRESEL processes begins during the start-up year and incoming students during later years will not be included in the sample and we will not collect survey data from them.

measures have been used extensively in research with diverse populations and have excellent reliability and validity. Given that data collection will take place in the rural Alaskan context with high levels of cultural and linguistic diversity, we will work closely with AASB and its local partners to ensure that measures and instruments are culturally and linguistically valid.

Table 7. Data to Be Collected and Data Collection Schedule

Primary Purpose			Data to Be Collected	Data Collection Schedule			
Document Treatment	Provide Covariates	Measure Outcomes		Fall 16	Sp 17	Sp 18	Sp 19
	✓	✓	Schoolwide teacher/staff surveys	✓	✓	✓	
	✓		Baseline teacher ratings of student SEL & behavior (K–8)	✓			
		✓	Posttest teacher ratings of student SEL & behavior (G1–8/2-8)		✓	✓	
	✓		Baseline student surveys (Grades 5–10)	✓			
		✓	Posttest student surveys (G5–11/G5-12)		✓	✓	
✓	✓	✓	District and school staff implementation surveys		✓	✓	
✓	✓		CRESEL program records (training sign-ins, feedback forms, meeting logs and notes, etc.)	✓	✓	✓	✓
✓	✓	✓	School records of SEL programming and implementation	✓	✓	✓	✓
	✓	✓	Student record data (demographics, achievement)			✓	✓
	✓		Alaska state school report card data				✓
	✓	✓	Extant School Connectedness and Climate Survey data	✓	✓	✓	✓

In fall 2016 AIR will send consent packages home to parents of K–10 students in the 30 schools[4], informing them of the study and seeking consent for including their child in the study. We will request information from the districts about student demographics and will gather publicly available data on the characteristics of participating schools and districts from Alaska's Annual School Report Card.

Teacher and school outcomes. Self-reports from teachers and staff will be collected prior to the CRESEL programming through online surveys. Schoolwide staff surveys will be administered each spring to assess staff perceptions of school climate, and to gather information about quality and variations in SEL implementation. Instructional staff will be surveyed regarding their teaching practices, cultural competence, their beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions of support from the school and

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[4] At the baseline, students at Grades 5-10 will take the student survey. Teachers of K-8 students will provide ratings of students' social and emotional skills using DESSA-mini. Extant data of Grades K-10 students will be requested from the districts.

district. Administrative, support and after-school staff will be surveyed regarding perceptions of school environment and support. School climate related outcomes will be based on SCCS survey data that AASB already collects across most districts in Alaska.

Student social, emotional, and academic outcomes. At the baseline, teachers of Grade K–8 students will be asked to rate the social and emotional skill of each consented student in the class using the DESSA mini (details are in Appendix J7-J8). After the baseline data collection, teacher ratings of students will be collected annually at the end of each school year. Teachers will be compensated ■ per hour for their ratings at each assessment point. Following a similar schedule, Grade 5–10 students will be asked to complete a student survey to report on their own social and emotional skills as well as their perceptions of school climate at the baseline and the two implementation years. The student survey is part of the SCCS survey that the participating schools already administer. This approach has been successfully implemented in AIR's previous projects (Kendziora et al., 2015). Student academic outcomes will be based on grades and performance on state standardized achievement tests.

Quality of implementation and control group practice. AIR will collect data on implementation and SEL practices in both the intervention and control schools. We will get data directly from teachers about their experiences as a teacher and their participation in professional development through a teacher survey administered at the end of each implementation year. We will collect school records on SEL programming and implementation. We also will gather training attendance and acceptance data at each training session. Additionally, we will collect program records on school and teacher participation and district involvement in spring 2017 and spring 2018.

Given the nested nature of the data (students nested in classes, teachers nested in schools, and schools nested in blocks/districts), special analytic techniques are required to estimate standard errors correctly. AIR will conduct impact analyses within an HLM approach. Most of the candidate schools are small rural schools that typically have few students per grade level or have students at different grade levels combined into the same class. Even the larger schools usually have only one or two classrooms per grade. Due to the local realities in the schools, we believe that a 2-level HLM model with treatment at the school level (level 2) and blocks as fixed effects is more appropriate than 3-level models that include an additional classroom level[5]. Examples of model specifications are presented in Appendix J. Given the annual collection of assessments and the fact that the CRESEL program lasts two years, group comparisons will be initially examined in summer 2017 to see if the effects of the schoolwide approach are evident after one year of implementation, but the full effect is not expected to be evident until after two years. The same analytic approach will be used to conduct group comparisons of student behavior and academic achievement collected at the follow-up.

Power Analysis AIR conducted power analyses for social and emotional outcomes as the primary student outcome using the following assumptions: (1) 15 intervention schools and 15 control schools from 5 districts; (2) 60 K–10 students per school, (3) impact based on a 2-level model; (4) an intra-class correlation (ICC) of 0.05 at the school level; (5) 25% of variance reduced by blocking; (6) variance reduction of 25% due to school-level covariate adjustment[6]; (7) 80% power; and (8) alpha of 0.05 for a two-tailed test. AIR will estimate districts as fixed effects because we do not expect the five

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[5] The statistical power consequences of omitting this intermediate level of clustering tend to be minimal, especially in small schools like these; Schochet, 2009, p.22).
[6] The assumptions about school ICC were made based on the ICC estimates provided by Jacob and Zhu (2009). The proportions of variance explained by blocking and school-level covariates were based on conservative estimates of the explanatory power of school-level covariates.

districts to represent a larger universe of possible school districts in which CRESEL might be implemented. The power analyses indicate that the evaluation will have sufficient power to detect an effect size as small as .198.

Variations in implementation are common for school-based RCTs but typical measurable thresholds for acceptable implementation are between 65–80% on dosage or fidelity indicators (Goodson, Price, & Darrow, 2014). Based on these levels, the acceptable level of CRESEL implementation will be two hours of coaching support each month and 7 school-based meetings a year. Impact analyses will follow an "intent to treat" model in which all schools are included in the outcome analyses regardless of their level of implementation. However, exploratory analyses using implementation levels as moderators will also be conducted.

AIR will establish processes and incentives for collecting basic implementation data in the non-CRESEL control schools. With AASB's assistance, AIR will seek limited information on SEL activities and supports at the schools using short online surveys followed by a phone interview each year with an individual responsible for SEL activities, as identified by the principal. AASB has budgeted resources for the districts to encourage school enrollment and will be working with the districts to recruit schools and students. Control schools will be provided with CRESEL services at the end of the study.

III. Sufficient Resources for Evaluation

A significant portion of the budget and time allocation are dedicated to evaluation. The American Institute of Research had an experienced team tailored for the needs of this project. A full overview of the team and roles can be seen in Table 5 on page 15 and in the budget narrative. Hours, staff role, and relate outputs are illustrated there.